REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated February 9, 2006. Claims 166-191 are pending, with claims 1-165 having previously been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer. By this Amendment, claims 175, 178, 179, 183, 184 and 186 have been amended by rewriting them in independent form, without narrowing a scope thereof, and claims 166, 169 and 190 have been amended to clarify the claimed invention thereof. Accordingly, claims 166-191 are presented for reconsideration, with claims 166, 175, 178, 179, 183, 184, 186 and 190 being in independent form.

Claims 166, 168, 169, 171-174, 180 and 190 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly obvious over Yabaneta (JP 06-175490) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,848,326 to Komuro et al. Claims 167 and 191 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly obvious over Yabaneta in view of Komuro and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,740,507 to Ichikawa et al. Claims 170, 181, 182, 185 and 189 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly obvious over Yabaneta in view of Komuro and further in view of Kitajima (JP 03-241372).

Applicant has carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and respectfully submits that independent claims 166 and 190 are patentable over the cited art, for at least the following reasons.

The present application relates to toner containers which are configured to be connected with a nozzle comprising an air inlet through which air flows into the toner container by way of an air conduit, and a hole through which toner is replenished to a developing section by way of a toner conduit. The air inlet is configured to surround a toner outlet of the nozzle. The toner container includes a mating portion and an air filter window. The mating portion allows the

toner container to mate with the nozzle. The air filter window is in a bottom of the toner container and is disposed at a position opposite to the air inlet of the nozzle. Each of independent claims 166 and 190 as amended addresses these features, as well as additional features. Such a configuration facilitates smooth flow of toner out of the container.

Yabaneta, as understood by Applicant, proposes a toner replenishment system which includes a suction device for drawing toner out of a toner container into a hopper. However, Yabaneta proposes that a nozzle is inserted into the toner container in a position in an upper portion of a toner container in which toner is absent.

However, Applicant does not find teaching or suggestion in Yabaneta of a toner container including a mating portion and an air filter window, wherein the mating portion allows the toner container to mate with a nozzle, and the air filter window is in a bottom of the toner container and is disposed at a position opposite to the air inlet of the nozzle.

Komuro, as understood by Applicant, proposes a technique for conveying collected toner removed from a photoconductive medium by a cleaning device to a developing device. Komuro was cited in the Office Action as disclosing toner receptacles having an air filter window.

However, Applicant does not find teaching or suggestion in Komuro of a toner container including a mating portion and an air filter window, wherein the mating portion allows the toner container to mate with a nozzle, and the air filter window is in a bottom of the toner container and is disposed at a position opposite to the air inlet of the nozzle.

The other cited references do not cure the deficiencies of Yabaneta and Komuro.

Ichikawa, as understood by Applicant, proposes a toner container which allows dense packing of toner in the container.

Kitajima, as understood by Applicant, proposes a toner container with a flexible housing.

The toner container is placed in an inverted, upright position, to allow toner to discharge out of the container. After toner replenishment is complete, the toner container is folded to stop toner flow.

Applicant simply does not find disclosure or suggestion in the cited art, however, of a toner container including a mating portion and an air filter window, wherein the mating portion allows the toner container to mate with a nozzle, and the air filter window is in a bottom of the toner container and is disposed at a position opposite to the air inlet of the nozzle, as provided by claim 166.

Independent claim 190 is patentably distinct from the cited art for at least similar reasons.

Accordingly, for at least the above-stated reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 166 and 190, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art.

The Office Action indicates that claims 175-179, 183, 184, and 186-188 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By this Amendment, claims 175, 178, 179, 183, 184 and 186 have been amended by rewriting them in independent form, without narrowing a scope thereof. It is submitted that claims 175, 178, 179, 183, 184 and 186 are allowable over the cited art.

In view of the amendments to the claims and remarks hereinabove, Applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge any

fees that may be required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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